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History of the Grand Army of the Republic and New Brunswick's Representation in the Civil War

By JOHN LAWRENCE

Past Department Commander



Read at a Meeting of the New Brunswick Historical
Club, March 18, 1909

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History of the Grand Army of the Republic and New Brunswick's Representation in the Civil War.



Past Department Commander John Lawrence.

John Lawrence, past department commander of the Grand Army of New Jersey read a paper at the March meeting of the New Brunswick Historical club on "History of the Grand Army of the Republic and New Brunswick's Representation in the Civil War." There was a good attendance, including many veterans. The paper was the most comprehensive on that subject prepared here and

will go down in history as an authority on New Brunswick's part in the war.

Mr. Lawrence was warmly congratulated by many of the professors present on the excellence of his work and the rules were suspended and he was made a member of the society.

The paper is in full as follows:

A short history of the Grand Army of the Republic and New Brunswick.

with representation in the Civil War read before the Historical Club of New Brunswick, Rutgers College, March 18, 1909:

At the close of the Civil War when the services of the great volunteer army were no longer required, nearly one million and a quarter men were sent to their homes without causing the slightest disturbance in the body politic. This in itself was a great achievement and could be scarcely possible under any other flag but ours. The professional man went back to the practice of his profession, the mechanic to his trade, the clerk to his store and ledgers, and their return was hardly noticed. They left behind them on the various battlefields of the South more than 300,000 men who had given their lives that the nation should live.

Many thousands returned maimed for life and unable to earn a livelihood. All over the north were women in the weeds of widows who had been deprived of their natural support, and many fatherless children were clinging to them for their daily bread.

Mayor Stephenson's Idea.

It was under these conditions that Mayor B. F. Stephenson conceived the idea of a great fraternal organization, that should bind the 1,250,000 men in a bond of friendship. Dr. Stephenson in the practice of his profession in Danville, Ill., encountered a great deal of misery caused by the Civil War, and his idea was to start an organization that should not only bring out the fraternal spirit of the veterans, but might also mitigate the sufferings of the widows and orphan children of those with whom they had fought side by side. The war had made the soldiers tent mates and under the canvas one night in February, 1864, the grand idea came to the doctor to form a society that would perpetuate the friendship and valor of the war. The idea was discussed together in their camps and weary marches and while lying on their arms, awaiting the crash of battle; and the very seriousness of the situation which heightened their mutual reliance emphasized also the beauty of an organization that would bring into the peaceful pursuits of life similar qualities of love and helpful co-operation. The project was not at that time worked out to their entire satisfaction, but after the muster out they kept in correspondence and close touch with each other. This was in the 14th Illinois Volunteer Infantry of which Dr. Stephenson had been surgeon.

G. A. R. is Organized.

Finally, in March, 1866, a meeting was held in Springfield, Ill., at which this

noble organization, unprecedented in the annals of history was given to the world. A large number of prominent Illinoisans and other officers were present at this meeting where a ritual was prepared and the members sworn to secrecy. This meeting resolved to organize themselves into a post of honor and named it "Lost Honor." This was the first organized post of the Grand Army of the Republic. They also formed themselves into a provisional department, electing Dr. Stephenson as the first department (or State) commander. A State encampment was held in Illinois, July 12th, 1866, at Springfield, at which General John M. Palmer, was elected department Commander. The first national encampment was held on November 20th, 1866, at Indianapolis. Dr. Stephenson presided and Gen. S. A. Hurlbut was elected the first commander-in-chief, and Dr. Stephenson was elected adjutant general. At first these national encampments were of a business nature but as the order grew, and the encampments were held at remote places, the need of something of a lighter character was apparent and various social customs were grafted on. Now they are delightful re-unions, looked forward to by the veterans and their families with pleasure. Yet they have lost nothing in dignity or capacity for business thereby, and have gained immensely in popularity.

The Brotherhood of Battle.

Thus was this Grand Army of the Republic the brotherhood of battle, born of the everlasting kinship of a common love of country, of a mutual bravery; of dangers shared and of a united, unflinching purpose. It had in it, too, not only the heaven of life but growth also; planted in a little tent, to blossom out in monster encampments. The war bred a closeness of spirit that could not die when the war ended. It is a brotherhood of men as well as memories. The necessary distinctions of war were swept away when the war ended. All men are equal in its councils and work; they stand side by side, shoulder to shoulder, in that final march of life, which ends only in the eternal bivouac. Privates foster generals, all sorts and conditions of men are in its ranks, even presidents of the United States have been in its ranks and gloried in the fact that they were entitled to wear the little bronze button of the order.

The purpose of the G. A. R. above all others is to minister to the needs of those sorrowing, widows and helpless children left behind by those who gave up their lives for "Old Glory". It is unique

and perhaps, the most remarkable organization ever called into being by circumstances; for only those who fought in the most gigantic rebellion in history can get into its ranks. An honorable discharge from the United States between April 1, 1871 and April, 1875, is the only qualification for membership; save that no man upon whom the stain of treason rests can be admitted to membership. Men of all ranks in life have honored it with their presence. Four Presidents of the United States have been proud to wear the insignia of the order. United States senators, representatives in congress, judges, governors, legislators, and in fact, men from every walk in life have been proud to claim affiliation with it. Our own congressman the Hon. B. F. Howell may be seen in the hall of our national legislature wearing in the lapel of his coat the bronze button of membership. Its cardinal principles are fraternity, charity and loyalty. Other organizations claim to be fraternal, but if one would see real fraternity, let him come to a meeting of the G. A. R., for no friendship is so strong as that welded during the heat and in the blood of battle.

Bronze Button "Open Sesame."

In G. A. R. post rooms no introduction is necessary. A button in the coat is sufficient to bind two old veterans in a bond that can only be severed by death. I say advisedly being a member of other fraternal societies, that nowhere is that principle more strongly exemplified than among members of the G. A. R. We are also taught the broad principle of charity—not that alms-giving that parades itself before the world, but charity on the principle that we should not let our right hand know what our left hand doeth; on the principle of the Golden Rule. Thousands of widows and orphan children will rise up in the great day and call the G. A. R. blessed. Only eternity will reveal the good the order has done. It is hardly necessary to say that we are loyal. We revere the flag, teach patriotism in the public schools, and to the youth wherever practicable. Chiefly through the efforts of the G. A. R., the flag of our country floats before or above almost every school house in the land. We are also taught reverence for our rulers, and are under a solemn pledge to work for good government and to frown upon disloyalty and anarchy in every form.

A Loyal Organization.

It seems hardly necessary to say that the G. A. R. is a loyal organization. With the Bible on its altar and the flag of the Union before us in every post room, our loyalty has never been ques-

tioned. Some years ago an attempt was made by designing politicians to use it as a help to their ambitions, but the idea of making the G. A. R. an auxiliary to any party was so frowned upon that the idea was abandoned; and now politics can not be breached in a post room. To make it more attractive the G. A. R. was organized as a semi-military organization, and the names of its officers were given a military or naval title such as: commander, vice commander, adjutant, quartermaster, etc. All orders from national or department headquarters are almost as implicitly obeyed as though we were in the field in active service.

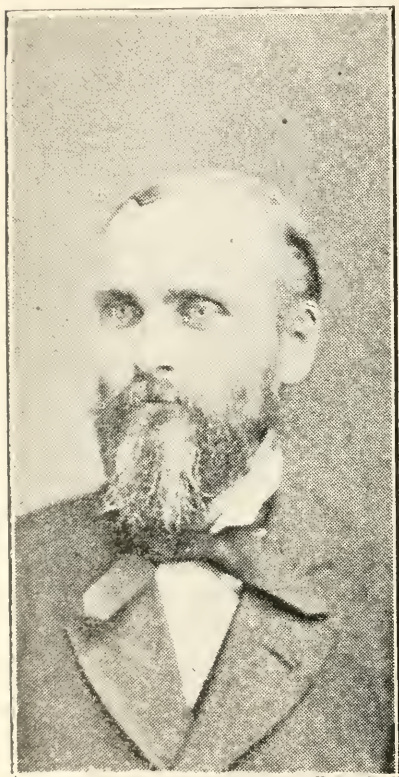
For offences against the rules and regulations of the order such as intoxication, drunkenness or using profane language in the post room, courts martial are prescribed and are conducted on the same lines as army courts martial. Should the defendant be found guilty, he may be suspended or expelled from the order. The verdict is subject to the approval of the department commander with the right of appeal to the national headquarters, where the decision is final.

Teaches Patriotism.

One of the chief duties of the G. A. R. is to teach patriotism and reverence for the flag. A patriotic instructor is appointed by the national encampment, and one by every department; who in turn appoints one for every post. His duty is to see that the rising generation is taught lessons of patriotism and good government. Memorial Day is peculiarly and appropriately adapted for this purpose, and the most opportune for attracting the youth to the most sublime purpose of the creation and existence of the Grand Army of the Republic. We took upon ourselves a grave responsibility in this respect. Those who are to follow us in the duties of citizenship are the millions of children, many the offspring of the millions who are flocking to our shores from foreign nations for happiness and liberty. No better insurance of peace can be obtained than the inculcation of principles, having lofty purposes and noble aspirations, that shall become established in receptive minds. If we can help the children to realize that they are to become the future guardians of the nation, the protectors of our beautiful flag, which is the emblem of righteous government, it will be a wonderful aid to the establishment of permanent peace with the world and a safeguard against the recurrence of the stirring days of the Civil War.

The Grand Army of the Republic submits to all organizations and to every individual this proposition of the recognition

tion of the flag, the emblem of American birthright. Lessons of patriotism will not be lost in recognition of Memorial Day. The lawless will recognize the representation of authority, and the budding spirit of patriotism in youthful hearts will be expanded into a determination to oppose foreign or domestic foes. The beautiful and impressive ceremony of decorating the graves of our dead comrades, inaugurated by the G. A. R., has been adopted by so many other organiza-



JOHN LAWRENCE,

From a Photograph taken at the Close
of the Civil War, Upon His Return
From the Front.

tions that the custom has become almost universal; and if after the G. A. R. has passed out of existence this beautiful custom is continued, it will constitute an additional legacy to future generations.

"Flag Day" Established

It was through the influence of this organization that Flag Day was established, and the beautiful display of our emblem of liberty on each June 14th will most fittingly celebrate the anniversary and

be a patriotic object lesson to the youth of the land. The custom of rising and thus showing our respect for the flag whenever the "Star Spangled Banner" is sung or played was largely brought about by the G. A. R.

Thus I have outlined as briefly as possible the organization of this great patriotic society; the principles for which it stands; what it has achieved since it has had its birth, and yet the half has not been told; of the widows and helpless comrades whose lives have been made happier through its ministrations. The amount expended in such work reaches an almost fabulous figure. But it is sad to think that in a few years the G. A. R. will be only a memory. There is no possible way to perpetuate it as its membership is limited to certain men and will cease at their death, and the time can be almost named when this will occur; for be it remembered that it is 44 years since the great Civil War was brought to a successful issue by the surrender of the enemy. Those who participated in the struggle are now walking our streets with frosted hair, stooped shoulders and faltering steps, but proud of the legacy they will leave to their descendants. Attempts have been frequently made to incorporate the Sons of Veterans with the G. A. R. but every attempt of the kind has been frowned upon by the National body.

Numbers Smaller Each Year.

It may not be uninteresting at this point to give a few statistics of the rise and decline of the society. I will commence with the year 1878 and show its progress in membership up to and including 1906:

In 1878	the membership was	31,061
" 1881	"	85,856
" 1886	"	323,571
" 1890	"	409,489

High Water.

" 1894	"	369,083
" 1898	"	305,603
" 1902	"	263,746
" 1906	"	235,823

These losses since 1890 when the organization reached its zenith of prosperity were chiefly by death, and I submit here the losses beginning with 1891:

In 1891	loss by death	1,708
" 1894	"	27,140
" 1898	"	13,853
" 1902	"	5,806
" 1904	"	10,249
" 1905	"	14,885
" 1906	"	9,248

The percentage of deaths has increased since 1886 when the percentage was 0.93 to 3.90 in 1905, and as the years go by the percentage will greatly increase as

there are few in its ranks under 60 years of age. Through the efforts and influence of the G. A. R. national homes for disabled veterans have been established in several states, there being two in our own State of New Jersey, one at Kearny for men only and another at Vineland for veterans and their wives. These homes are maintained partly by the general government and partly by the State, so these old and disabled comrades are tenderly cared for in their declining years.

So much bearing on the national organization.

Department of New Jersey.

The Department of New Jersey was organized as a department, Dec. 10th, 1867, its present membership being about 4,200. It ranks eighth in the order of seniority. The department consists of 106 posts, scattered all over the State, and it wields a great influence in the councils of the national body. The present commander-in-chief is a member of Arrowsmith Post, No. 61, of Red Bank, the Hon. H. M. Nevins.

We are proud of our record as Jersey-men, for we hail from a common-wealth of long years standing, over whose soil trod the army of Washington in the struggle to establish this government, and which furnished about 88,000 young men to perpetuate that government established by our fathers. Our little State furnished some men whose names add lustre to the American name. McClellan, Kearny, Sewell, Ramsey, McAllister Schoonover, Janeway, Trex, Runyon, Rusling, and a host of others, and her sons nobly upheld the honor of the State and added fresh lustre to the name of "Jersey B'ne." Those who were fortunate enough to reach home did so without bringing a blot on the fair name of New Jersey. It has had for its commanders men who displayed the greatest bravery under fire and who distinguished themselves on many a bloody field. General Jardine was the G. A. R.'s first commander in 1868, and he has been succeeded by Gen. Ward, Gen. Goble, Major Burrows, Col. Huefy, Millikin and Houghton, Gen. Campbell, Gen. E. Burd Grubb, Gen. Donnelly, Col. Stahl and others including our present commander-in-chief, who left an arm on the field. All the commanders of our state department have upheld the dignity of the G. A. R. and have contributed to place the department though small in numbers, in the position of influence it now occupies. An effort will be made at the coming national encampment at Salt Lake City to have it meet in Atlantic City in 1910.

New Brunswick Men in the Civil War.

Before touching on the history of our local post, it may be interesting to say that our own town contributed its full quota to the Civil War. Under the first call of our martyred President Lincoln for 3-months men, one full company was sent to the front. It was designated Co. K, Third New Jersey Militia and was under command of Capt. Castner, the father of our own Capt. Joe who seems to have turned out to be a worthy son of a noble sire and whom Rutgers College is proud to claim as an alumnus. Under the next call for 75,000 men for three years, our city furnished two full companies of 100 men each, which were designated Co.'s F and G First Regiment N. J. Vols. They were commanded, respectively, by Capt. Enos Fouratt and Capt. A. M. Way, and constituted a part of Gen. Phil. Kerny's First N. J. Brigade. Later, when another call was made by the president, the town again furnished a full company of 100 men which was designated Co. B, Ninth N. J. Vols. and was commanded by Captain C. W. Castner whose term of service with the 3 months men had expired. Later on, still another company was sent to the front and was attached to the Fourteenth Regiment as Co. K, Col. J. J. Janeway, was one of its original officers, being promoted to captain major lieutenant colonel and brevet colonel. Captain John Manning was also an officer of this company, and many of our best young men were in its ranks. Thus it will be seen that New Brunswick contributed its full quota of men for the Civil War the above organizations being only a part of those who went. In addition to these companies many of the young men went into the Twenty-eighth Regiment, and other organizations and in the Navy. So that it is safe to say that our city sent over 700 young men to the front to help suppress the rebellion.

It may interest you to know that the writer served in the same company with several of the young men who left Rutgers College and enlisted in the ranks. I recall the names of Pohlman, who lost his life at Gettysburg, Bliss, Dooley, Van Arsdale, Messerole, Vanderbolt and Slebert. These young men belonged to the same class as the Rev. Allen Campbell. Three of them became ministers and Van Arsdale is now assistant editor of the Christian Intelligencer. All of them came home commissioned officers, except Pohlman, who was killed in action. Thus you see that not only our city but your beloved Alma Mater contributed her share to the bloody contest.

City Sent 700 Men.

New Brunswick has no reason to be ashamed of the number of men she sent to the front. Without having access to the exact figures, it is safe to say she furnished over 700 men. Almost before the echoes of the first gun fired on Fort Sumpter had ceased to reverberate through the land a mass meeting was held in the First Reformed church; patriotic addresses were delivered but the climax was reached when ex-Mayor Garrett Conover started to sing the "Star Spangled Banner," which was taken up by the audience, rising to their feet and waving handkerchiefs, all showing the most unbounded enthusiasm. Shortly after this meeting the call came for 3-months men and our city responded with more than could be accepted. One company, Co. K, of the Third Regiment was accepted and sent to Washington as part of a Jersey brigade commanded by General Theodore Ruyon. Our townsman, Stephen Moore was lieutenant colonel and John H. Janeway (brother of H. L.) was chaplain. The New Brunswick company was officered by Capt. Castner, First Lieutenant Samuel Ross and Second Lieutenant Geo. M. Stelle. Owing to the short term of their enlistment they saw no actual fighting, but left a memento behind them, Fort Ruyon, which they built at the end of the Long Bridge and which constituted one of the principal defences of Washington. Many of this company re-enlisted for longer terms.

Then came the call for 3-year men, and again New Brunswick came promptly to the front with more than her quota. Two companies F and G of the First Regiment, were recruited and sent to the front. Both of these had been militia companies and formed a nucleus of 200 men, Co. F being the old Deshler and Col G Olden Guards Co. F was officered as follows: Capt. Fnos Forratt, Lieutenants Smith G. Blythe, David Thompson, Henry C. Warner, (N. H. VanArsdale now assistant editor of the Christian Intelligencer promoted from Co. G), John H. Voorhees, I. L. E. Elkins, A. L. B'ne and Benj. Moffitt.

The officers of Co. G were Capt. A. M. Way, First Lieutenant J. D. Wyckoff, Robert Boggs, Carley Swan and Howard M. Gillman, a grandson of Rev. Dr. Webb. Capt. Way was promoted to major and Capt. Forratt was appointed colonel of the Thirty-third Regiment and participated in Sherman's famous march from Atlanta to the sea. Both of these companies were part of General Phil. Kern's brigade and participated in all the battles of the Army of the Potomac, from Bull Run to

Cold Harbor, after which many of the men re-enlisted in other companies.

A Battle Incident.

I cannot refrain from mentioning an incident of the battle of the wilderness: Our Jersey brigade was on the extreme right of the line. During the engagement Lieutenant Carley Swan, of Co. G had both legs shot from under him by a shell, and our line was pushed back some distance leaving Swan between the firing lines. Capt. Wyckoff with Christian fortitude and courage went to his dying friend and tenderly prayed that the Heavenly Father would be merciful to him. This was done with shot, shell and bullets flying thick around them. Such an example of courage should not go unrecorded.

The next full company furnished by our city was Co. B, Ninth N. J. Vols., and Captain Castner having re-enlisted was placed in command, Charles H. Soffield and Thomas Bennett were subsequently captains of this company. The lieutenants were: L. Bartholomew, L. D. Shepard, John Bennett, E. E. Hubbs, James Larchlin and R. E. Cogan. This regiment was with the Burnside expedition and participated in all its engagements from Roanoke Island to Goldsboro, N. C., March 21st, 1865, and made a record of which they may well feel proud. Co. K Fourteenth regiment was the next full company recruited here. It was officered by Capt. J. J. Janeway, afterwards promoted to major and lieutenant colonel and brevet colonel; Lieutenants John L. Manning, promoted to captain; Henry D. Bookstar, James Chaffey, L. A. Hoffman and E. D. Mandeville. This regiment was mustered in Aug. 26th, 1862 and was commanded by Colonel, afterwards, General Trex, and had its first taste of battle at Monocacy, Md. It was afterwards transferred to the Third Division Sixth Army Corps under General John Sedgwick and added fresh luster to the name of Jersey Blue. Many young men enlisted also in Co. I, of this regiment, and should be credited to New Brunswick.

The next command to take the field was Co. H, First N. J. cavalry, composed almost wholly of young men from this city. Among its officers I find only two natives of this town—Lieutenant Alexander Canse, a son of a one-time sexton of the First Presbyterian church, and Alexander Stewart, who was killed in action.

Tribute to General Janeway.

Quite a number of our young men were also in Co. L, of this celebrated regiment, which was raised by Lieutenant Hugh H. Janeway, assisted by his uncle, Henry L. Janeway, one of your honored

trustees. I wish I had ability to portray the services of this young man, only in when he enlisted, but rose rapidly to the rank of captain, major, lieutenant, colonel and brevet brigadier general. He was one of the first officers wounded and almost the last to yield up his life in devotion to the Union. His was a fighting regiment and Col. Hugh was always in the thick of it, seemingly taking delight in the clash of arms. No more intrepid and no braver a soldier ever drew sabre. There seemed to be a brilliant career in store for him, but his death leaves a shining mark. It was my pleasure to meet him often on the march, and he never failed to dismount from his magnificent black charger and have a chat about home. A tablet to his memory adorns the walls of the First Presbyterian church. This regiment has a distinguished record of 93 battles and skirmishes. It was for some time ~~was~~ brigaded with the command of General John B. MacKintosh of this city. The records of Co. F, Thirty-fifth Regiment disclose the names of a lot of New Brunswickers. Its captain was Ira C. Carman, Lieutenants A. J. and S. J. Beckman, Wm. H. Ludlow and Edward Kennedy. This regiment was first assigned to the defences of Washington, and afterwards assigned to the sixteenth and seventeenth Army Corps; took part in numerous engagements under Sherman, and was in the famous march to the sea, and has an honorable record.

In Sept. 1862 New Brunswick again responded to the call for troops and a full company was sent to the front. This was Co. D, Twenty-eighth N. J. Vols.; Capt. William Dunham, and Lieutenants Augustus Hafield, William J. Cook and John H. Voorhees. In addition to this company quite a number of men enlisted in other companies of this regiment. It was a 9-months regiment and participated in the battles of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville and acquitted itself with credit.

New Brunswick was also represented in the Thirty-fifth Regiment with Sherman. Our city was represented in every branch of the service—infantry, cavalry, artillery (in Batteries A and B) the navy, signal corps and in fact in every department of the army and navy.

Admiral Bogg's Services.

The navy was well represented by our townsman, Commodore Charles S. Boggs, who, chafing at inactivity, and the navy department being unable to give him a commanding service, went to Connecticut, and purchased and fitted out

and armed the steamer "Vandal" which sailed for the coast and was taken by the rebels to New Orleans where he participated in the capture of Fort Fisher. One of the boats was blown up and gave them a respite of some few years in a sinking condition and his death struggling in the water. The boat that blew at the peak of this year when she went down is in possession of Henry J. Devay Post and is highly prized as a relic.

But I find I am in danger of transgressing the time limit set me by Dr. Scott so I will hasten to a brief history of the local posts of this city.

History of Local G. A. R.

The first post, old Kearny, No. 15, was organized in Sept. 1868 and continued as such till 1872 when an account of dissensions, a number of members left the post and organized a second post named Col. Hugh H. Janeway, No. 6. In 1877 this post was consolidated with Kearny post and the consolidated post was named Kearny-Janeway, No. 15, and remained so until 1882 when a second post was organized and named Robert Boggs, No. 67, after the son of Admiral Boggs. These two posts continued in existence till 1903, when another consolidation was effected and a charter granted to Boggs-Janeway Post, No. 67, which is still in existence and is in a flourishing condition with 120 members. Harmony exists in its ranks and the post ranks fifth in point of numbers and is quite influential in the department, owing to the large number of votes, (eighteen,) it controls at the State encampments. It has nobly carried on the work for which the Grand Army was organized, and has done its full share of charitable and patriotic work. I can find nothing more appropriate with which to close this paper than by using a quotation from William Russell Rose, entitled, "1861-1901."

1861.

Out of the North, the loyal North,
They came at the chieftain's call
On fields of battle, in Freedom's name,
They forced Rebellion's fall.
Shoulder to shoulder, they pressed along,
Thrilling the land with their marching song.

Said at the drum with its pulsing beat;
Ryehime the fall of the tramping feet.
Saw of manhood under the blue,
Ready and eager; and fearless and true,
Loyalty's life, with restless flow
Swept through the mists of the long ago

1901.

Slowly they come with throb of drum,
The flag with its scars above,
In memory's name, the loyal flame
They feed from the cruse of love,
Shoulder to shoulder, they come in view,
Side by side in the dear old blue;
Halting and bent, and with faltering feet,

Onward they plod, through the cheering
street,

Burdens of age under blouses of blue—
Many the dead, and the living so few,
Loyalty's army, remnant of yore
Drifts toward the mist of the silent
shore.

JOHN LAWRENCE

March 18, 1909.







